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THE PHANTOM™

#15
MOONSTONE™
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Mike Bullock
Carlos Magno

THE PHANTOM

created by LEE FALK

"WALKER'S LINE"
PART TWO OF TWO

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANT
ED RHOADES

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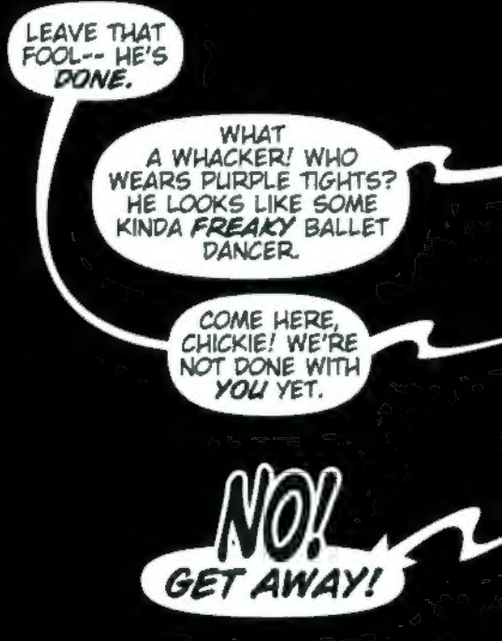
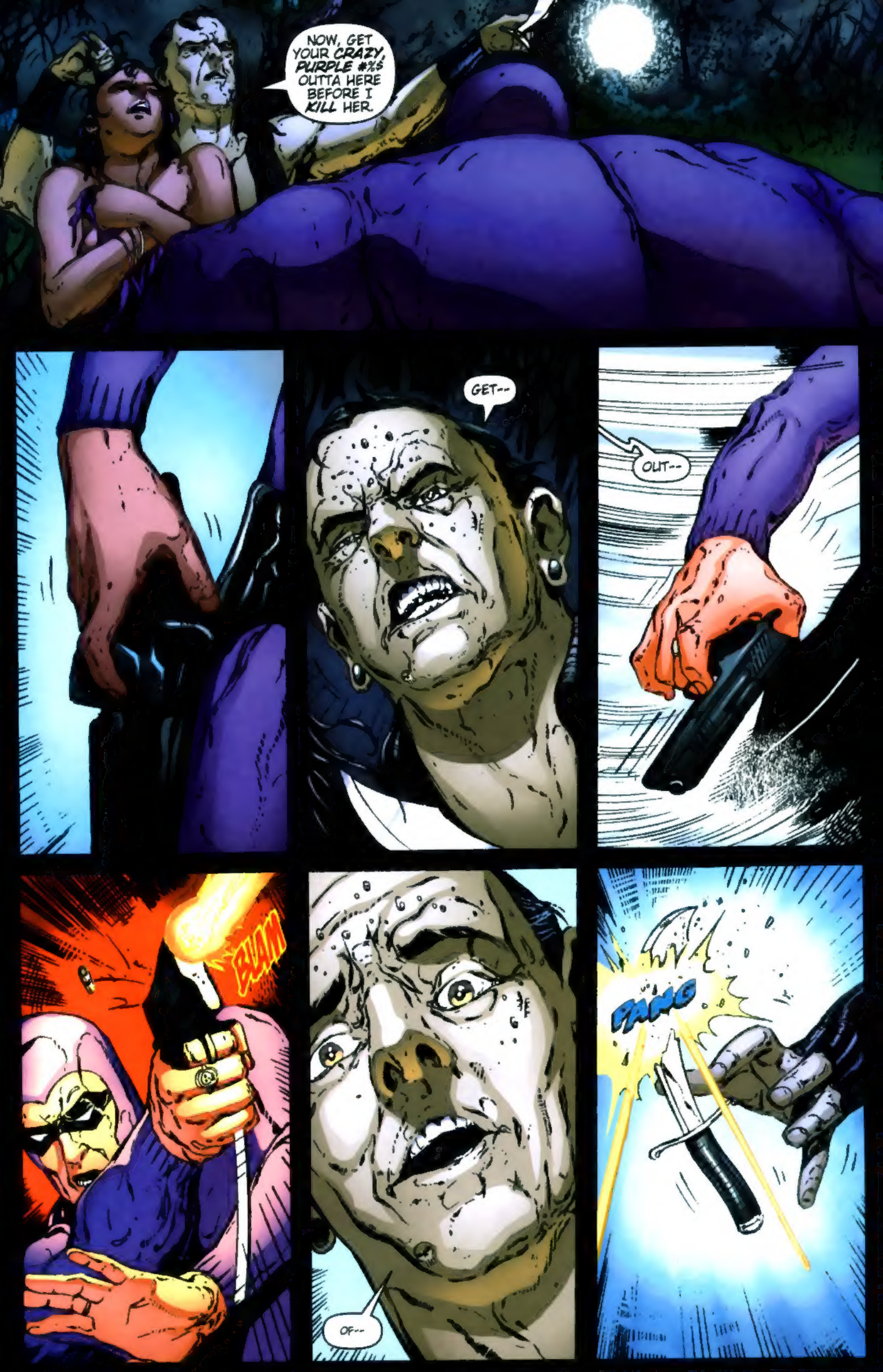

LEAVE THAT FOOL-- HE'S DONE.
WHAT A WHACKER! WHO WEARS PURPLE TIGHTS? HE LOOKS LIKE SOME KINDA FREAKY BALLET DANCER.
COME HERE, CHICKIE! WE'RE NOT DONE WITH YOU YET.
NO! GET AWAY!

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE HIT ME WITH, BUT I DID KNOW THE RED IN MY VISION WAS MOSTLY MY OWN BLOOD.
YOU LOOK LIKE A SWEET PIECE...
"I LATER FIGURED OUT THE PART THAT WASN'T BLOOD WAS RAGE."
GET HER SHIRT OFF!
AH!
WHAT ARE YOU?
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NO MEANS...
...NO!

YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR THAT, BARYSHNIKOV.
SEND ME A BILL!
KRUNCH
BACK OFF, DANCER BOY OR THE GIRL GETS A NEW MOUTH.


NOW, GET YOUR CRAZY, PURPLE #%$ OUTTA HERE BEFORE I KILL HER.
GET--
OUT--
BLAM
OF--
BANG

"PAGING DR. KENNEDY. DR. KENNEDY, PLEASE REPORT TO ROOM 217."
LORI, DO YOU HAVE THE ROOM CHARTS FOR INTENSIVE CARE?
YES, MA'AM. HERE YOU GO.
MASSIVE HEAD TRAUMA! HURRY!
COME ON, LORI!
NOW IT'S TIME FOR SOME PAYBACK ON THAT OLD WOMAN.

OH, I'M GONNA KILL YOU FOR THAT, MAN!
DON'T WORRY, MISS. IT'LL ALL BE OVER IN A MINUTE.
THE ONLY THING THAT'S GONNA BE OVER IS YOUR LIFE!
RAAAH!
"COMPARED TO THE PHANTOM, LIGHTING IS SLOW"-- OLD JUNGLE SAYING
CRA-ACK

YOU'LL BE OKAY, MISS.
Y-YOU SAVED ME...
WEE-OOO WEE-OOO
ARE YOU OKAY?
WH-WHAT HAPPENED?
"AT THAT POINT, I REALIZED I WASN'T AS CONCERNED WITH AUNT BESSIE'S NECKLACE AS I WAS THE SAFETY OF THESE INNOCENT PEOPLE.
"I'D SPENT MANY YEARS WALKING DOWN THESE STREETS, ENJOYING THIS PARK. IT WAS TIME TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE ELSE COULD ENJOY IT AS WELL."
WEE-OOO WEE-OOO

"THIS GANG WAS LIKE A WEED TAKING OVER A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN. IT WAS TIME TO PULL IT OUT BY ITS ROOTS.
"BUT FIRST, I NEEDED TO GO CHECK ON AUNT BESSIE."
HELLO.
WHY THE LONG FACE, LITTLE ONE?

I MEAN NO HARM, IS SHE OKAY?
I'M SORRY SIR, WHERE ARE MY MANNERS? MY POOR EMILY HASN'T BEEN THE SAME SINCE IT HAPPENED. CLARKSVILLE USED TO BE SUCH A NICE TOWN...
SINCE WHAT HAPPENED? IS SHE ALL RIGHT?
THOSE BLASTED GANGS. ALWAYS SHOOTING UP THE PLACE. NEVER PAYING ATTENTION TO SEE IF THERE ARE INNOCENT CHILDREN ABOUT...
I'M SORRY SIR, WE HAVE TO GO. WE HAVE SOME THINGS TO ATTEND TO...
GOODBYE.
SO DO I...

OH, AUNT BESSIE..
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME...
I FAILED TO PROTECT YOU ONCE. IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.
I PROMISE.
SIR, VISITING HOURS ARE OVER, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE.
YOU NEED TO LET HER SLEEP SO HER BODY CAN TRY TO MEND ITSELF-- THE NEXT 24 HOURS ARE CRITICAL.

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO COME BACK IN THE MORNING. NOW GO, GET SOME REST YOURSELF...
...YOU'RE STARTING TO LOOK LIKE SOME KINDA GHOST.
PAGING DOCTOR RHOADES, DOCTOR RHOADES PLEASE REPORT TO ROOM 428.
??

HOW COULD HE KNOW?
"ANGRY PHANTOM IS FEARFUL TO BEHOLD" --OLD JUNGLE SAYING
DOCTOR KENNEDY, PLEASE REPORT TO ROOM 217. DOCTOR KENNEDY, PLEASE REPORT TO ROOM 217. STAT.
AAH!
WUZZAT?!

IT'S ABOUT TIME I FINISHED WHAT I STARTED.
...NOW THERE WON'T BE ANYONE TO PLAY EYEWITNESS TO ANYTHING.
SEE YOU IN HELL--

GET AWAY FROM HER!

RRRRAAAAHHH!
-OOOOOFF-
AAAAHH!

GR-U-U-UNCH
I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE, ESA, BUT IT'S TIME YOU--
--DIED!

I AM THE GHOST WHO WALKS.
I CANNOT DIE.
YOU AIN'T NO "GHOST". JUST SOME WHACKO IN A PURPLE SUIT.
I'M GONNA CUT YOU UP, THEN GO BACK UP STAIRS AND STICK THAT OLD WOMAN LIKE THE PIG THAT SHE IS WHILE YOU LAY DOWN HERE AND BLEED TO DEATH.
HER SCREAMS WILL BE THE LAST THING YOU EVER HEAR!
I AM THE GHOST WHO WALKS...
"NEVER THREATEN THE PHANTOM" --OLD JUNGLE SAYING

GUARDIAN OF THE EASTERN DARK...
THE MAN WHO CANNOT DIE...
BUT ON YOUR WAY TO THE AFTERLIFE, YOU WILL REMEMBER ME AS...
THE PHANTOM.

"I WAS BEGINNING TO LOSE CONTROL. AND WHILE HIS WORDS PUMMELED ME, THE ONLY THING I COULD THINK OF WAS TAKING HIM OUT OF COMMISSION...FOR GOOD.
THAT'S ALL YOU GOT? AIN'T NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME FROM KILLING THAT %@$#& OLD LADY!
SHUT UP!
YOU KNOW YOU AIN'T GONNA KILL ME, BUT I AM GONNA KILL HER.
SHUT UP!
I MIGHT EVEN HAVE SOME FUN WITH HER BEFORE I SLIT HER THROAT!
SHUT! UP!
I HAVEN'T HAD ME SOME OLD LADY IN MONTHS--
BLAM
SHUT UP!
"THAT'S WHEN IT HAPPENED..."
"YOU KILLED HIM?"

ONE MINUTE AGO
"BEFORE I PULLED THAT TRIGGER, I WAS ABOUT AS CONFLICTED AS I'VE EVER BEEN. ONE OF THE PITFALLS OF YOUTH IS LETTING YOUR EMOTIONS CONTROL YOU, INSTEAD OF YOU CONTROLLING THEM.
"AND AT THAT MOMENT, MY EMOTIONS WERE IN CONTROL OF ME, FOR SURE.
"BUT IN THAT DARKEST OF TIMES, EVERYTHING IT MEANT TO BE CALLED THE PHANTOM CAME RUSHING BACK TO ME, TO GUIDE MY HAND.
"THE LEGACY YOUR GRANDFATHER PASSED DOWN TO ME AS HIS FATHER HAD PASSED IT ON TO HIM.
I MIGHT EVEN HAVE SOME FUN WITH HER BEFORE I SLIT HER THROAT!
"THE OATH OF THE SKULL.
SHUT! UP!
I HAVEN'T HAD ME SOME OLD LADY IN MONTHS--
SHUT UP!
"AND JUST BEFORE I MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF MY YOUNG LIFE, I HEARD MY FATHER'S VOICE."
"NO, SON. KILLING IS NOT OUR WAY."
BLAM

NOW
YOU OWE ME YOUR LIFE. DON'T MAKE ME COLLECT.
DON'T HURT ME! FANTASMA!
THE GHOST...
OATH OF THE SKULL...
"I WAS TREMBLING AT HOW CLOSE I'D COME TO KILLING HIM. JUST THINKING ABOUT IT MADE IT HARD TO KEEP MY STOMACH DOWN."
HE'S THE LEADER OF THE SKULLS GANG, ALL RIGHT. HE'S LUCKY WE GOT HERE WHEN WE DID OR HE'D BE THE LATEST MURDER VICTIM IN CLARKSVILLE.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET MY NECKLACE BACK, BUT I'M GRATEFUL NONETHELESS.
THE NURSE SAID SHE CAN GO HOME IN A FEW DAYS. SO, STOP WORRYING, YOU LOOK AS PALE AS A GHOST.
I'M SORRY, UNCLE EPHRAIM, I WAS JUST SO AFRAID WE'D LOSE HER.
WELL, WE DIDN'T, EVERYTHING'S FINE NOW. COME ON, LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING OUT IN THE HALL.
STREET GANG BROKEN UP
POLICE SEEK MASKED MAN FOR QUESTIONING
THIS SHOULD SET YOUR MIND AT EASE. IT SEEMS CLARKSVILLE HAS SOME SORT OF GUARDIAN ANGEL LOOKING OUT FOR US NOW.
SO, AFTER MAKING SURE AUNT BESSIE WAS GOING TO BE OKAY, I RETURNED HOME, AND SOON FOUND THE MAN WHO HAD YOUR GRANDFATHER'S GUN BELT. BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.
SO, EVEN AFTER ALL THAT, YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM?
NO, KIT. WHEN I CALMED DOWN ENOUGH TO REFLECT ON THOSE EVENTS, I WAS ASHAMED BY WHAT I'D ALMOST DONE.
BUT I WAS GRATEFUL YOUR GRANDFATHER'S WORDS GUIDED MY HAND AT THE LAST INSTANT.
MURDER DOESN'T FIGHT INJUSTICE-- MURDER IS INJUSTICE.
AND WHAT SORT OF EXAMPLE WOULD THAT SET FOR YOU AND YOUR SONS?
THE END.

BEHIND THE MASK

The Phantom's Other Family

by Ed Rhoades

The Phantom's responsibility to fight evil and injustice requires a well-rounded education and life experience. Although learning about fighting and jungle survival from his father is a valuable training for the mantle he must someday wear, it is not enough, so as a young man, the Phantom attends school while living with his mother's family. Keeping this in mind, the choice of the Phantom's wife is important not just for her bloodline, but for her family as well.

The first Phantom's wife was a Spanish princess; the fourth Phantom's wife was the niece of William Shakespeare. Other mates of Phantoms have included a daughter of a maharajah, an Indian princess, a pirate queen, an Italian opera singer, and a sharpshooter Annie Morgan (inspired by famed Phoebe Ann Oakley Mozee).

Lady Maude, the mother of the current Phantom died when he was living with her sister, Sophie. Adjustment to small town life was not an easy one. He was out of place. Jungle bred, his frame of reference made him appear like a savage to his extended family in their civilized setting. His Aunt Sophie and her husband Ephraim had boasted that he was the son of a rich plantation owner and arranged an elaborate reception to welcome their nephew; however, upon his arrival his uncivilized appearance and jungle-bred demeanor embarrassed them in the presence of their friends. Young Kit's uncle decided to spank him as punishment for the incident not knowing the danger he faced with such an act. Guran, an adult pygmy warrior, who was sworn to protect Kit, was prepared to kill Ephraim, and Kit at the age of 12 was already more than the equal of a full-grown man and capable of protecting himself. After running away from his new surroundings, Kit discovered that his Aunt Sophie was concerned about him and he returned to her home.

As their familial bond grew, Kit's aunt and uncle played an important part in the Phantom's development from a headstrong youngster to a mature, thoughtful man. It is reasonable to assume that the formative years he spent in their care were instrumental in transforming youthful stubbornness to mature resolve. As those years passed, his aunt and uncle came to love Kit. During his stay with them, his heroic act of protecting students from a panther and his incredible athletic prowess put their small town on the map and endeared Kit to everyone in the kindly community.

His uncle, who at first viewed Kit with misgivings, later became proud of the fine young man he grew into and carried sincere affection for his nephew.

There are different official accounts of Kit's childhood. The earliest being a Sunday strip beginning in July 1944. It's likely Alfred Bester ghosted this version, while Lee served in the armed forces. In this early plot, young Kit stays with his Aunt Lucy and Uncle Jasper Walker in the town of Centerville. Lee retold the same story with a few changes in another Sunday strip beginning in June 1959. The basic elements are the same, but the setting is the small town of Watertown where he stays with his Aunt Sophie and her husband. Lee's final version appeared in "The Story of the Phantom," a 1972 Avon paperback, in which young Kit resides with his Aunt Bessie and Uncle Ephraim in Clarksville. Yet another very well written account was "The Son of the Phantom" by Dale Robertson, which was based on the first Sunday story and featured art by Wilson McCoy from the original Sunday story "Childhood of the Phantom." When I asked Lee about this, he replied, "I had nothing to do with it. I was in the army."

All are similar in details and characteristics and present Kit's extended family in the same way.

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